

Theopia Jackson, Ph.D.

Candidate for President-Elect



“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”.
-African proverb

Hotep family! I am extremely honored, humbled, and frankly a bit in awe of being nominated to serve as President-Elect. It has been a blessing to grow professionally in the bosom of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), Inc. as a protective factor in my professional development. I recognize how its values and tenets were embedded in my undergraduate and graduate experiences at Howard University through the tutelage and mentorship of such jegnans as Drs. Boykin, Campbell, Harrell, and Roberts; it was the amniotic fluid in which I was socialized into the field of psychology. These experiences required me to critically interrogate Western psychology and actively embrace my African-essence from a strengths-based and culturally-affirming stance. When I finished my doctoral studies in the Bay Area, where several of the courses/approaches introduced a sense of psychological alienation and professional dehumanization, I quickly recognized the necessity to seek out the resiliency that ABPsi affords. Like many predominately White institutions, the Wright Institute, in California, admirably positioned me to be a competent clinical psychologist but it was ABPsi that positioned me to be a culturally impactful Black clinical psychologist and healer. Collectively, these experiences have fueled my commitment to the viability and permanence of ABPsi for future scholar- practitioners.

My leadership activities in ABPsi and the many relationships forged along the way inform my sense of readiness for this nomination. Most notable was serving as General Assembly Chair, which included working with members in executing the work of the board, supporting membership in revising the by-laws, collaborating with leadership in national conference planning, and strategically interfacing with Student Circle members in an effort to create diverse opportunities for jegnaship and direct leadership pipelines in

ABPsi. As co-chairs, I partnered with Dr. Alexander in assuming the responsibilities of the Education & Training Committee, building upon efforts of Drs. Griffith and Mariette, and laying the groundwork for expansion. For several years, I have been a reviewer for the Journal of Black Psychology and participated in various task forces and initiatives at the pleasure of past presidents. Lastly, I am learning more about another vital pulse of ABPsi as the Bay Area Chapter President, which is the community demand for the on-the-ground work at the all-important chapter level. Collectively, these experiences have afforded me opportunities to work with diverse members across the country; learning from elders, collaborating with colleagues, and being inspired by while being responsive to the next generation of ABPsi leaders, our students. In each position, I have worked intimately with the national office staff, benefiting from Ms. Lewis' expertise and efficiency, as well as appreciating the struggles and need for more infrastructure and sustainability. This is a priority for the current leadership and one that I plan to advance.

Appreciating that ABPsi is a professional organization, I would submit that it is much more and is experienced as an affirming professional family. In Western psychology, being reared by a single mother who received public assistance and living in an improvised urban community in Boston conceptualized me as and messaged to me being 'at-risk'. However, the African-centered nature of ABPsi mirrored my being at-potential and the scholarship of Black psychology gave words for my spirit; informing my voice as a clinician, supervisor, educator, and advocate. I am forever indebted to the scholarship of our brilliant forefathers and mothers, as well as the genuine mentorship, guidance, and respectful correction of such leaders as Drs. Canson-Griffith, Goddard, Grills, James Meyers, Nobles, Rowe, White, and many, many others. This family of scholar-practitioners has consistently been there for me, welcoming me home like their prodigal daughter or sister. As the Association quickly approaches its 50th birthday, it is my desire that ABPsi is 'always there' for our communities and for many generations of Black scholars and practitioners to come. Reflecting on Elder Nobles' comments, "We did what we needed to do; now what are you going to do?" I recognize the importance of this charge for the next generations; one that I embrace in working across membership. It is my hope that many will *step-up, step-in, and step-out* with me on behalf of ABPsi.

In some aspects, the depth and breadth of scholarship and quality of practice among ABPsi's membership has been a well-kept secret and an untapped resource of talent that warrants greater visibility and utility within the Association, as well as globally. To ensure ABPsi's legacy, many will need to *step-up* to share their skills and *step-in* to leadership roles. Through a service-leader model, I hope to tap into the sustaining-well of the Association's membership and consider leadership models that embed succession plans and resources. It is my intention to further efforts in recognizing, promoting, and utilizing the excellent work of members are doing and bringing this work more strategically into ABPsi. I invite each member to consider the following in actualizing ABPsi's fullest potential: *What does ABPsi mean to each of you and you to ABPsi?*

The current global and national socio-political context require that ABPsi boldly and unapologetically *step-out* as it inserts itself into diverse conversations and planning pertaining to the life of persons of African ancestry. ABPsi is uniquely positioned to reinvigorate and foster essential alliances to strengthen what it means to healthy and whole from a culturally-centered perspective and to explore implications across diverse settings and disciplines. The Emotional Emancipation CirclesSM could be one of the blue ribbon models and is in alignment with President-Elect Huberta Jackson-Lowman's vision of ABPsi establishing a certification process for identifying, promoting, and supporting programs that operationalize our mission.

Additionally, I submit that ABPsi needs to directly impose its voice and directives in various spaces and places where persons of African ancestry are being served, researched, evaluated, and engaged by folks who do not recognize their essence and reduce their humanity to a diagnosis.

We must discern connections and cultural allies where we can leverage the values of African-centered approaches for the betterment of those being served and trained to serve; we simply cannot leave any of our people behind.

As the opening proverb teaches, when we collectively *step-up*, *step-in*, and *step-out*, we will be able to further the reach and relevance of ABPsi. We must simultaneously *reclaim*, *regenerate*, and *revere* the mission of ABPsi. It is imperative that ABPsi is a KNOWN entity across all educational institutions and training programs, at home and abroad. We can no longer afford for some to be guided or introduced to ABPsi, where others may casually discover or many more never know we exist. The Association's national and international membership is instrumental in this initiative. The proverb below is apropos for closing this statement. From a systems' perspective, ABPsi has a life of its own and the purpose of each generation of membership and leadership is to further its life-line. If I am so fortunate to be elected, it is my intention to build upon the past, shore up the current, and contribute to the future. This can be accomplished through an interdependent strategic plan that...

1. Builds up the infrastructure to manage the business of the Association,
2. Fosters interconnectedness among different entities within the Association (e.g., active collaboration National Board and Student Circle Board members; among chapters and boards, etc.),
3. Explores and considers sustainable funding sources that align with our mission,
4. Increases national and international membership and relevance of ABPsi to its membership and global communities,
5. Institutionalizes and increases the Association's Internet footprint and use of technology in expanding our mission, and
6. Positions ABPsi as the content-expert for all intending to educate, train, and serve persons of African ancestry.

"If you know the beginning well, the end won't trouble you".

~Ghanaian proverb